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Our opinions

The CIA meddles

AMERICANS seem to be the last to learn what the Central Intelligence Agency is up to, and now they are learning about the CIA's role in Cambodia from a Cambodian who had a part in it.

Prime Minister Thanh told a British interviewer, before attaining his present post, that the United States paid millions after 1965 to train his own rebel troops. He said CIA agents assigned to him assured him of help if existing government of Prince Norodom Sihanouk were overthrown and the rebels came under left-wing attack.

The government was overthrown in 1970 and that led to a leftist counter-attack joined by Sihanouk and that in turn led to a massive American-South Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. So the Southeast Asia war engulfed

Cambodia, as it had Laos, where the CIA also was involved with its private army. The results of all this meddling have been to spread a war without gaining a vestige of victory. If the meddling alone were not bad enough, the disasters following it made it worse.

So far the CIA seems to have done better in its strictly intelligence operations than in its paramilitary and covert actions, but not even Congress knows for sure. Congress might be expected to approve a standing proposal to require that the CIA report to it as well as to the Executive branch. Instead, Congress is voting what amounts to a blank check, and getting reports on Central Intelligence Agency activity through the prime minister of Cambodia.